THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) During the Deputy Prime Minister's visit to USA., the U.S. officials reiterated their desire to send team to India to offer clarifications on issues pertaining to the U.S. request to India to consider deployment of Indian troops in Iraq.

(b)Yes, Sir. A U.S. delegation has since visited India and held discussions on 16th June 2003.

(c) The Government held intensive consultations with the U.S. delegation in order to have a better appreciation of the situation. The U.S. delegation gave a briefing on the political, economic and security situation in Iraq and outlined the political and operational context of a possible deployment of troops by India in Iraq.

PM'S comments on Indian troops for Iraq

475. DR. AKHILESH DAS:

SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister in his recent 3-Nation tour of Germany, Russia and France at a Press Conference in Lausanne spelt out five questions that India expects to be answered before India could consider sending or not sending its troops for stabilisation process in Iraq;

(b) if so, what specific questions were posed that needed to be answered before consideration of the proposal; and

(c) what answers, if any, have been provided thererto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On June 2, responding to queries in a Press Conference in Lausanne, the Prime Minister had indicated that India needs answers to some questions before it can consider sending troops for the stabilisation process in Iraq. The questions referred to were: (1) Why are the Indian forces being asked for? (2) Would they be tasked with maintenance of law and order, or in the event of any potential revolt, would they be required to use force? (3) How long will our troops be required to stay? (4) What is the road-map for Iraq? (5) Under whose command would our troops function?

(c) Discussions were held with the U.S., the U.N., Iraq's neighbours and Iraqi representatives concerning these issues. Clarifications were obtained on some of the issues, while some gray areas remained.

Indian troops for Iraq

476. SHRI JIBON ROY:
SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have considered the question of Indian troops to Iraq for helping establishment of transitional Government in Iraq and for setting up a democratically elected regime in that country;

(b) if so, the decision taken in the matter;

(c) the terms and conditions appended to the scheme;

(d) whether the scheme has the UN sanction;

(e) whether Indian troops if deployed would serve under American military command; and

(f) if not, the strategy worked out by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government's decision of July 14 in this regard is as follows:

"The Government of India has given careful thought to the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq.

Our longer term national interest, our concern for the people of Iraq, our long-standing ties with the Gulf region as a whole, as well as our growing dialogue and strengthened ties with the U.S. have been key elements in this consideration.

India remains ready to respond to the urgent needs of the Iraqi people for stability, security, political progress and economic reconstruction. Were there be an explicit UN mandate for the purpose, the Government of India could Consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq.

In the meanwhile, Government of India is ready to contribute to the restoration of infrastructure, medical, health, educational, communications and other civilian needs of the Iraqi people. As a